12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
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very few among the Mundurucú—interviewed in 1952 was born in 1892. Since his most reliable recollections probably date from his adolescence, his memories of things seen and heard will be of value only for the time after about 1905—and I am being generous here. The period of 1905 and shortly thereafter is within the last decade of the rubber boom and is well over a century after the first contact between Mundurucú and whites. In short, it has been necessary to exercise great caution with these data.

A good deal of the data from informants were datable, within broad limits, by their context. Thus, when I heard that a duty of the chief in times past was to "buy goods for the people," I knew that I was not faced with the pristine. And, fortunately, there is some highly useful documentary history on the Mundurucú. One does not get a smooth historical continuum replete with detail, but it is possible to discern in the written records some of the large-scale changes that have taken place in the society. I have avoided the method, common in acculturation studies, of working with two cultural base lines, the aboriginal and the present, and comparing the two. This procedure may have some value when the transfer of items of culture from one society to another through diffusion is studied, but it does not lend itself to the analysis of the continual interplay of the forces of stability and change acting on a social system.

The Mundurucú present advantages for the student of social change. It has been said that there are three socially and culturally distinct Mundurucú populations, which differ in degree of change—a differentiation that took place only during the past twenty-five years as a result of migration. This study does not include the population of the Tapajós River, where Mundurucú society is most drastically changed, but concentrates on the people of the savan-

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121 nahs and the Cururú River. The differences between the
134 savannah villages and those of the Cururú, and between the modes of social life of the two groups in general, are profound, and I believe that they can be traced to the degree of participation in trade and the rubber-extraction industry. A comparison of the two groups is rewarding because it reveals two points of Mundurucú history. And since the savannah villages will probably be abandoned in a generation or two, and their residents will move also to the banks of the larger streams, a comparison also gives a glimpse of the future. Beyond these considerations, an element of control over the data is introduced. Processes of change that may be surmised to be at work in the savannah communities may be seen to have run their course on the Cururú. Conversely, we need not speculate on the antecedents of social structure on the Cururú River, for we see them on the savannahs.

128 I start my analysis with a presentation of Mundurucú
[127] history, based on published sources and information given by the priests of the Cururú mission. The next four chapters, the main body of the book, present general material on traditional Mundurucú culture and social structure in the savannah communities. The last of these four chapters, chapter 6, discusses the contemporary bases of social integration, and the centrifugal tendencies in Mundurucú society. This is also the logical place to discuss relations with the whites. Chapter 7 shifts attention to the Cururú River villages and analyzes the progressive disorganization of Mundurucú society there. The final chapter summarizes the findings on social change and discusses their implications for general anthropological theory.